(c) Government implements the disinvestment programme in a manner which is conducive with market conditions and the prevailing economic environment. It follows a well defined procedure which involves extensive inter-ministerial consultation and decision making. Moreover, Government does not sell its equity holding in distress and adopts a graduated approach towards disinvestment. While sometime causing delays this approach ensures that the sales realisation is maximized and the transfer of management control to the strategic partner is successfully completed.

**Poor telecom network**

*151. SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that telecom network in the country is very poor and inadequate for providing phones to rural areas in the country and if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the growth during the recent years has been concerntrated in urban areas; if so, the details of the teledensity in urban and rural population during the last three years;

(c) whether Karnataka figures poorly in terms of providing access to phones in rural areas; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to improve phone services in rural areas of the State?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) No, Sir. It is not a fact that the Telecom Network in the country is poor. However, the progress has been slow in rural areas due to inadequate availability of funds, equipments and materials alongwith fast changing technolgoies. Irregular or absence of power supply, insufficient accessibility and scattered demand have also contributed to slow and tardy growth of Telecom Network in these areas. Further the Telecom Services in rural areas have been unattractive due to low revenue and high cost per DEL (Direct Exchange Lines);

(b) The growht of DELs in an area is dependent upon demand which in turn depends upon economy, literacy rate, commercial activites and per capita income etc. Growth of telecom has been obsered in both urban as well as rural areas in the last few years. However, the rate of growth in urban areas in more as compared to the rural areas. The teledensity per hundred population in urban and rural areas of the last three years is given as under:

| Year | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|
| 1999-2000 | 0.68 | 7.64 |
| 2000-2001 | 0.93 | 10.16 |
| 2001-2002 | 1.21 | 12.22 |

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Improvement in telecom services is a continuous process. Following steps are taken in phased manner in the country including rural areas of Karnataka:

(i) Majority of connections are planned to be given through Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network for which equipment is likely to be received during 2003-04.

(ii) Fault repair services are computerized and centralized at all short distance charging centres for round the clock booking of faults and their prompt rectification.

(iii) Upgradation of external plant.

(iv) Replacement of old paper core cables by jelly filled cables.

(v) Replacement of life expired telephone instruments.

**Increase in unemployment**

*152. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unemployment has increased in the nineties *vis-a-vis* eighties;